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November Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term November average:

Great Lakes Basin	78%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	83%
Lake Superior	86%
Lakes Michigan-Huron	63%
Lake Ontario	109%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

November Outflows From the Great

LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

Volume 5, Number 12 **December 8, 1997**

Another Dry Month

Seasonal Decline of Lake Levels Continues

Water levels of all the Great Lakes continued their seasonal decline during November. The magnitude of decline was near average on Lake Superior and significantly greater than average on the other lakes.

The recent trend of below average precipitation continued over most of the Great Lakes basin during November. These dry conditions contributed to the relatively rapid decline in lake levels during the month. Lake Ontario's basin received more precipitation than other areas, and this contributed to a stabilization of the lake's level during the last part of November.

Despite the decline in lake levels, at the end of November Lakes Huron, St. Clair and Erie were all still 40 to 50 centimetres above average levels for this time of year. These three lakes are now midway between average levels and record high levels. While the decline in water levels has helped to reduce the risk of shore damage, there is still considerable risk of extensive damage along these three lakes if a severe storm should occur.

Fortunately, no severe wind storms have occurred so far this fall. Last month the largest storm surge on Lake Erie was only 60 centimetres at Port Colborne near the lake's eastern end, and 50 centimetres at Bar Point, which is at the lake's western end. From historical records, there is a 50 percent chance in a year that a surge greater than 1.3 metres will occur at Port Colborne and greater than 60 centimetres will occur at Bar Point.

A continuation of dry weather would lead to further declines in the levels of all three lakes over the next month. However, if an average amount of precipitation should occur, then Lakes Erie and St. Clair would only decline marginally. Above average precipitation could also slow the decline of Lake Huron's level.

Despite below average outflow during November, Lake Superior's level declined significantly, primarily due to the dry conditions. At the end of November, the lake was four centimetres above average. Its level is likely to continue falling for several months, and there is little risk of extensive damage to properties along its shore.

Lake Ontario's level was about 11 centimetres lower in November than the previous month. Its level was stable during the last 10 days of the month, and it was eight centimetres above average at the end of November. While a further decline is possible, rainy weather during the next month could result in a

Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term November average:

Lake Superior	79%
Lake Erie	119%
Lake Huron	111%
Lake Ontario	119%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

modest increase in the lake's level. The risk of damage to shore properties over the coming months is low.

High St. Lawrence River flows contributed to above average levels on Lac St. Louis near Montréal. During November, the lake's level was about 15 centimetres above average. Meanwhile, levels further downstream at Montréal Harbour were slightly below average during the month.

Large Turnouts at Public Meetings on New Lake Ontario Regulation Plan

The very strong turnout at six recent public meetings underscored the public's continued interest in water level fluctuations in the Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River system. Close to 700 people attended the three meetings in the U.S. organized by the IJC and its International St. Lawrence River Board of Control. Last month we reported on the three meetings in Canada.

At the Brockport and Sodus Point meetings, shore property owners gave a qualified support for the new regulation plan, called Plan 1998. On the other hand, the public in Massena voiced opposition, citing lack of consideration for the local environment. They also criticized the IJC and the Board for the extremely low water levels on Lake St. Lawrence this summer caused by high Lake Ontario outflows.

A common call heard at all the public meetings was that the regulation criteria for Lake Ontario should be updated. The existing criteria, developed in the mid-1950's, are considered outdated and thus no longer reflect the current needs of all the interests affected by water level fluctuations, including the environment and recreational boaters. A study plan has been developed by the Board, but has not been funded by governments.

The information collected at the public meetings is being examined by the IJC in order to reach a decision regarding the new regulation plan. The Board continues to exercise its discretionary authority, when situations arise, to make departures from the regulation plan in order to provide overall benefits to all the interests in the system.

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